



- **Provide ongoing training and professional development for teachers, administrators, community partners, students, and family members so that everyone understands service-learning.**

**S**CHOOL DISTRICT PERSONNEL AND COMMUNITY partners, working with the local service-learning advisory committee, must provide the school community, including students, with adequate training and technical assistance to fully understand and implement service-learning. The training must include strong examples of service-learning so that people can understand its power and apply it in their own communities. For people who have never participated in a service experience, it is essential to provide opportunities to be service providers.

Ideally, the training of all stakeholders should occur simultaneously so that they can bring their perspectives to the discussion. However, training school personnel alongside community members and students may be difficult. Often, each group wants to learn about a new strategy with their peers so that they can discuss common understandings and become proficient with the strategy before collaborating with others. Therefore, the initial approach may be to provide training for each stakeholder group separately and then bring everyone together.

Because one-time professional development workshops fail to prepare people adequately to use a new strategy, professional development must be continual. Initial training must be followed by opportunities to try out a new method and refine or even redo lessons using the strategy until it feels comfortable. Also, having colleagues with whom to share successes and failures often makes learning a new strategy easier (Sterling 1997, 33).

***“Successful or model partnerships must realize that in order to affect teaching and learning, extra time and intense professional training are required. In successful models, there is a strong collaboration to provide such training.”***

Floyd Gonella, San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

## **Train and Support Everyone Who Participates in Service-Learning**

The following participants in service-learning should have training that meets their unique needs:

- **Teachers.** Service-learning is not a course in isolation but one of many teaching strategies used by educators to deliver locally approved curriculum to students. Service-learning is more complicated than many other teaching strategies because of its multiple components—meeting an identified community need, collaborating with a community partner, enhancing students’ sense of civic responsibility, and allowing time for reflection.

Teachers who use service-learning must be supported by their administrators. Teachers should have opportunities to attend training regarding service-learning and to come together and share ideas and materials, especially about service activities that can be easily replicated.

School districts must identify teachers who are successfully using service-learning and allow

them to serve as mentors to their colleagues.

These teachers may also serve as models to college students observing classrooms as a part of their course requirements or as master teachers for candidates in teacher education credential programs.

- **Administrators.** School and district administrators must fully understand service-learning. They must see students as citizens in the community beyond the school campus and as contributors in that community. Administrators must play an active role in developing the alliances with community organizations that will enable the students to meet real community needs.

The support of administrators, particularly that of school principals, is essential to spread service-learning beyond the involvement of individual teachers. Principals who make school time and resources available for training and encourage planning by teachers to implement service-learning stimulate the expanded use of this strategy (Weiler and others 1998, 77).

Administrators must be knowledgeable about liability and other administrative issues that may arise when students are involved in off-campus service activities. By receiving continual training about these issues, administrators can avoid roadblocks that may prevent the success of service activities.

- **Students.** Like the other constituents involved in service-learning, young people need ongoing training. Providing students with a full explanation of service-learning and its place in the curriculum gives them the context for service activities.

Service-learning must not be something that just happens to youth. To avoid this situation, the Youth Advisory Council, a statewide collaborative of young people interested in promoting youth involvement in community work and service-learning, recommended, in 1996, that

# Binational Mural Project Off to Good Start



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The Binational Mural Project kicked off last week with a visit from Calexico native and Binational Mural Project Lead Artist, Armando Rascon.

Calexico High School was the site of the first Service-Learning Workshop for the Binational Mural Project entitled "Border Metamorphosis." According to City of Calexico Arts Commission Chairwoman Carmen Durazo, the school was proud to host its alum, artist Armando Rascon. "Students at the workshop were mesmerized as Rascon led them through a slide show of his artistic and creative talent," stated Durazo. Rascon started with his background as a student at Calexico High School and sequentially led them on a professional journey, from his first college art class assignment to his current art exhibits. "The message was clearly motivational, for he was living proof that student success in the art world is possible," said Durazo.

Rascon then gave a brief overview of the theme behind the project—a theme of unity, a multicultural celebration of what unites the people of both sides of the border.

The Calexico High students met for three days at the border fence, learning about graphic design and how to paint a sample of the mural on a section of border fence. They also learned how they were serving their community, since this project is also a service-learning project. Rascon spent time each day reflecting with the students about what they had learned that day. They interacted with their peers across the border, community leaders, and the press.

Among the members of the community joining Rascon and the students for the week were Calexico City Councilmen John R. Renison and Gilbert Grijalva; Beautification Commissioner German Jimenez; Border Patrol Agents Steve Martinez, Joe Rivera, and Lisa Garvey; Brenda Hinojosa from the Imperial County Arts Council; former Councilman Antonio "Tony" Tirado; and several parents of the students who were out to show their support.

Durazo stated, "A special thanks has to be given to Calexico High School Principal, Nancy Merino, for sponsoring the workshop and also to the Border Patrol for providing paint and supervision throughout the three-day workshop, to the Calexico Beautification Commission for donating paint and supplies, and special thanks to the Imperial County Arts Council for their daily support."

Mr. Richard Ortega of the Calexico Neighborhood House also became involved in the project last week by providing classroom space for student reflection.

Officers of the Arts Commission were also present. Stephen Wong was in charge of videotaping this historical moment, and Hildy Carrillo-Rivera was busy providing water for the students and taking photos for posterity.

"This was truly a collaborative effort in building community through this project," said Durazo. "The border fence is a visible part of our lives and together, we can make this project successful."

*Calexico Chronicle*, May 7, 1998. Reprinted by permission of the *Calexico Chronicle*.

students receive an orientation to service-learning. This orientation must include representatives from community agencies. Since even young children can understand the concept of “helping others,” this orientation sets the stage for all service activities during a school year.

While students may fully understand their role in school, their role as a service provider is different. Not only can the training link the curriculum to the world outside the school, but it also creates an opportunity for students to examine their civic responsibilities and their roles when working with community agency personnel in community settings.

- **Parents and families.** Parents, guardians, and family members must be introduced to service-learning as an instructional strategy and “understand what their children are doing if they are going to support their involvement” (Cowan 1996, 178). Families should be invited to participate in training offered to the school staff or even to join their children at a service-learning orientation in school or at a special evening event. Families must be aware that service-learning may involve students leaving the school grounds to work with agencies or individuals in the community.

Many parents and family members are looking for ways to be involved in their children’s education, and family members can provide valuable assistance to teachers and students in implementing service projects. Family members who work and cannot attend service activities during school hours can participate in weekend projects or develop special events, such as recognition ceremonies. Families and guardians can have many opportunities to become service providers alongside their children and to convey to them the importance of service.

- **Community partners.** Community partners must be ready to work with youth and understand the

school curriculum that is being enhanced through the service activity. Partners must train school personnel about the need that students will fulfill by performing a particular service. Since the culture of community-based organizations can be very different from that of schools, the expectations must be clearly explained to students (Battenburg n.d., 1).

- **Support staffs.** Classified staff in the school districts and support staff in community agencies or businesses must understand service-learning. The role of young people is quite different in service-learning activities, and support staff must be prepared to work with youth in a new way. Some service projects may involve working directly with or alongside maintenance or clerical personnel. Roles need to be well defined so that everyone feels comfortable and is working toward a shared goal.

## Design a Professional Development Plan

A professional development plan to train all participants about service-learning should be designed. This plan must build on existing school and community resources and expertise. Teachers and administrators who have successfully implemented service-learning will be the best resource for school-based training. Community partners whose agencies focus on youth will often bring a wealth of knowledge about how to engage young people in meaningful service.

Additionally, professional development opportunities through state and national organizations must be pursued. California has numerous professional organizations for school personnel, and each of them must provide training and resources about service-learning. There are also national organizations that focus primarily on service-learning or link service-learning tightly to their mission.

## North Coast Rural Challenge Network Summer Gathering

In Mendocino County four small rural school districts have formed the North Coast Rural Challenge Network (NCRCN). Every year NCRCN holds "The Summer Gathering," a three-day professional development institute, where over 100 teachers and administrators, 25 community members and parents, and 25 students come together to learn about project-based instruction, action research, videoconferencing, service-learning, and evaluation and to plan the projects for the coming school year. As a follow-up to the institute, the NCRCN district coordinators provide staff development to help teachers use service-learning to teach their district's curricula and to plan meaningful service projects with community partners.

North Coast Rural Challenge Network  
CalServe Renewal Application, 1998

Likewise, businesses, community agencies, and nonprofit organizations have professional development conferences that should highlight service-learning. Collaboration with schools has become a focus for all employment sectors through America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, initiated at the 1997 Presidents' Summit for America's Future. This national not-for-profit organization led by General Colin Powell serves as a nationwide catalyst, urging public, private, and nonprofit organizations to focus their combined talents and resources to improve the lives of our nation's youth.

## Further Reading Related to This Recommendation

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